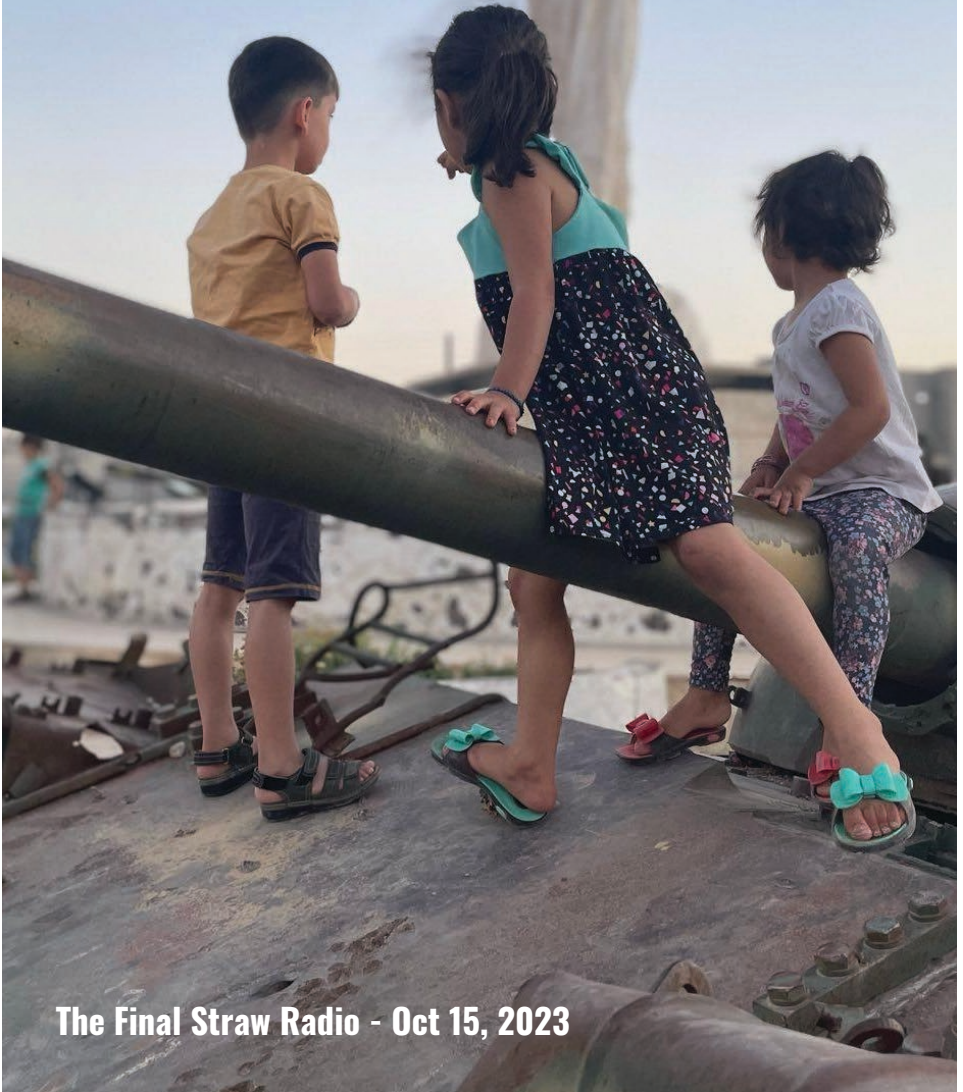


Updates on Rojava Revolution (with ECR)



The Final Straw Radio - Oct 15, 2023

This week on the show, we're featuring an interview with 3 activists involved in the Emergency Committee for Rojava about recent developments in Rojava, escalation of violence from the Turkish state and the KDP party-led Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, experiences of recent visits to the region, updates on the US relationship to aggressive regimes in the region and other topics.

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Anya: Anya here. My pronouns are she/her. I'm originally from Ukraine, but I'm currently living on the unceded lands of the Onondaga Nation, upstate New York.

Clara: I'm Clara, she/her is good. For me, I'm in New York City, Lenape territory.

Arthur: Arthur here, he/his. I'm in Seattle, so Coast Salish territory, broadly speaking.

TFSR: Cool. Thank you very much. Thanks for being willing to speak to me. We're going to be speaking here about the updated situation in the Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria, aka Rojava. Could y'all speak a bit about your experience with the region? What is the Emergency Committee for Rojava? And what brought you to that project?

An: Okay, I can start us off. Thanks so much for having us on this show. I learned about the Rojava in 2017. That was the height of the fight against ISIS. I got fascinated by the ambition and the scope of this project. They're trying to revolutionize every aspect of social life, and they're doing it on a territory that is now populated by at least 4 million people. So that's quite impressive. At that time, I was not able to go to the region. But I decided to go to Bakur, North Kurdistan, occupied by Turkey, just to see what the Kurdish movement was able to achieve there. Because the first attempt to build this new social-political system based on the ideology of democratic confederalism was attempted there. Unfortunately, it was brutally crushed by the Turkish government. So when I was there in 2018, two years after the military operation by the Turkish state against the movement in the Kurdish-majority regions, people were quite demoralized, and the popular assemblies, cooperatives, and autonomous municipalities were wiped out. They were not functioning anymore. So that just got me thinking that we should be doing a better job internationally to make sure that the same would not happen in northeast Syria. So I joined the Emergency Committee for Rojava, which started out in New York City in 2018. I joined it soon after it was co-founded by Debbie Bookchin and some other folks and have been involved with the ECR since then.

Just a very quick preview of what ECR is, it's a US-based national organization that works in solidarity with the Kurdish Freedom Movement more broadly, but particularly with northeast Syria. If anyone from New York is listening, we try to do most of our monthly meetings in a hybrid format. So we meet in person in New York City, and folks from other parts of the country call in via Zoom. We believe that because we are based in the United States, it's especially important for us to defend this project, just because of the United States' very long history of

destabilization in this region in the Middle East, but particularly because of the US long history of support for and direct complicity in Turkey's war on Kurds that continues until today. So we just recognize the need to engage in politics, engage in solidarity effort here in the United States on two levels. If I might use the Zapata metaphor, from above and from below. So in terms of politics from above, we try to put pressure on the United States government, demanding that it ends its complicity with the Turkish state, stop military sales, and financial aid for any military equipment, that it forces Turkey into resuming peace negotiations with the Kurdish Freedom Movement to ensure long-lasting peace in the region. But we also tried to do politics from below by reaching out and building bridges with different leftist and progressive groups across the United States who engage in similar type of politics and struggles that the people in northeast Syria in the Kurdish Freedom Movement do. That's all on my part.

Ar: Thanks a lot. I wonder if we should just keep the sequence that we started with the intros. Does it make sense, Clara?

C: Yeah, fine. I am Clara Moore. I think Anya gave a great overview of the ECR and the work here. So I was living in Rojava for two years, working at the Rojava Information Center. Then also with the women's movement, Jineology academies, and the Mala Jin, the restorative justice system. Mala Jin is a Kurdish phrase that means a woman's house. It applies a restorative justice model towards domestic and family issues. Hopefully, we talk about that. I'll pass it over to Arthur.

Ar: My interest in the Rojava revolution and the Kurdish Freedom Movement more broadly goes back to the siege of Kobani in 2014-2015. Just being an activist, hearing from a lot of other people this strange buzz that there's this revolution happening across the world. It's like the Spanish Revolution all over again. At first, it all sounded romanticized. I felt very skeptical, and it was all too good to be true. But I looked into it and quickly became fascinated and inspired by what was going on there. The idea of Democratic Confederalism and the bottom-up grassroots democracy as an alternative to the state, alternatives to capitalism and patriarchy also being experimented with. I think that started me on a journey to try to learn more and more. As I learned more and more, I also wanted to get more and more involved in trying to support in some way, meeting people who went there was influential, also getting connected with activists who were doing solidarity work was very influential. But eventually, I wanted to travel there, I wanted to see it for myself. I had this strong sense that movements here in the US and the West broadly, everywhere in the world really, just had so much to learn from the revolution in

Rojava. Not only from their accomplishments but also because it's a real-life social revolution that's happening in real-time. Also felt that there's a lot to be learned from the challenges that they're facing too and what they're doing to navigate those challenges. So eventually, I decided to go there.

It took many years for that to make sense. But I recently returned from spending one year there roughly. In my time there, I was mainly doing research and spending time with various structures of the movement. I'm sure we'll get into the details later. But I was lucky to spend time in things like communes and cooperatives, meeting people from different aspects of the movement, autonomous women's structures, and was incredibly inspired by what I saw there. So when it comes to ECR, what comes to mind is something that our late comrade in ECR Meredith Tax once said, which is—I'm paraphrasing, but she said something like "If we want to learn from this experiment, we have to help defend it, or we have to help it survive." I think that says it all. It's not some academic, abstract project that we want to learn about this revolution from the outside and extract our knowledge and our strategies from it. We feel a responsibility to be in solidarity with it in an active way. That's what the Emergency Committee for Rojava is all about. As Anya said, we do a lot of different kinds of advocacy, but we're trying to teach people what's going on in the movement and try to build a grassroots solidarity movement here in the US.

TFSR: I had a chance recently to speak with Hazel and Katya, who'd recently come back from Bakur across the border in Turkish Kurdistan, where much of the ideological and infrastructural roots of the Rojava revolution sprouted from. Since we've covered some of the history in the past of the Rojava revolution in prior episodes, including one that Anya was on, I suggested listeners needing a refresher check out one of our back episodes, including ones that are transcribed if that's easier for you, or the website for the Emergency Committee for Rojava.

Ar: It's an enormous topic.

TFSR: I know. To be frank, any of the subject matters that y'all had said, "I'm prepared to talk about this." That's half a book right there.

I wonder if, from having been in Kurdistan generally, whichever side of the border with Turkey you're on, from talking with regular people, if you go got a sense of dynamics between people there who are eager to participate in the political project of the Rojava social revolution versus those who are just going about their day-to-day lives. Because anytime you're in an

area, whether it be one of the attempted autonomous zones that occurred in the so-called USA during the uprisings of 2020, or the Zapatista struggle, you'll have people that are just like "This is my home, I'm just here" versus the people that are real advocates for a specific vision. But I wonder if you have any examples that you could talk about or reflections on the contrast between those or how people were able to navigate that. Also how the Autonomous Administration interacts with non-movement people in Rojava?

C: I think this is a great question. I'm really glad you asked it because it's a region of 4 million people. That's really important to understand. People have different political histories. There are even different Kurdish movements in the region. Many different ethnic groups have their own histories. The point of the Autonomous Administration is to bring everybody together with certain principles that are red-line. So those being gender equality, direct participation, pluralism, and self-defense of the different ethnic groups. Essentially what the Autonomous Administration tries to do is create a framework with red lines for people of all different political persuasions, all different backgrounds to participate in a project together, create harmony in this society.

Now, there are plenty of people, therefore, who weren't necessarily aligned exactly with the movement. When we say the movement, often what we're talking about is the Kurdish freedom movement and the PKK and that revolutionary history. It's evolving, constantly changing what the movement means as more people take ownership of the project and how it's evolving on the ground. The Autonomous Administration actually includes, while it came out of that history and it was established by the movement, so to speak, nowadays on the ground, there are people with all different political ideas and backgrounds who are participating in and helping to build up the project, which is the idea that the movement tries to establish. There are plenty of people who work within the Autonomous Administration who aren't necessarily directly aligned with the "movement" but appreciate and acknowledge the structure that the Autonomous Administration allows for people to pursue democratic self-determination in the region. Then, of course, there are people who just don't support the Autonomous Administration at all. There are people who support the Syrian regime who live in the area. There are people who might support Iraqi Kurdistan, their model of capitalist Kurdish nationalism as what they would want for northeast Syria. So there are people of all different types of political persuasions.

There are plenty of people also who are just not interested in being politically involved. That's an interesting aspect also when we talk about social revolution, social projects, and direct democracy. There's also an individual temperament

element. It takes energy, focus, and an interest on a certain level to be consistently politically involved. So there are plenty of people who just are not trying to focus their energy necessarily on this project but maybe appreciate it or don't. It's also a very difficult situation in general. They were under embargo, and they really still are in many ways. The US was a big player in that until recently until last summer. They are under bombs. Daesh is an insurgency. So, it's a really difficult situation. There's not enough electricity, and there's less electricity than there was before the war under the Syrian regime in the region. The economic situation in the Autonomous Administration regions is the best in Syria, but that's not saying much. This is a country that has experienced 12 years of war. So you're also getting internally displaced people from other parts of Syria who are coming to the Autonomous Administration because the economic situation is better there. So, you're getting a flood of migrants as well, which puts stress on the system.

The Autonomous Administration are the people who get the people to turn to and say, "Hey, what's going on? Why is oil so expensive now? Why are all of these things happening?" They're now the people "in power," and that idea is antithetical to the Autonomous Administration. The idea is that you're working together as a community. But again, if most people in the world even are very used to the idea of relating to the governance structure in your region as somebody above you or somebody to fight with maybe, or to be in opposition to, or something like this. So you have the idea of the Autonomous Administration is to bring everybody into the project so people take responsibility for fixing things. It takes education, it takes reality on the ground, and even the people in the Autonomous Administration are also learning what that means. So you have all these dynamics of what's going on in the region and trying to build a genuinely new way of relating to governance amongst the population in the context of war. Some people don't like the Autonomous Administration, some people do. Some people work in it and don't like it, because it's also a lot of jobs it provides at this point. This is a complicated thing. I hope that helps you understand how complicated it is.

Ar: I would just quickly add a couple of things because this is maybe the topic I thought about the most in my time there, this uneven development of these bottom-up structures of governance. Because it's one thing to push out the forces of the state and create a revolutionary new structure of local self-governance, but it's a whole other thing to get people to show up to it, to buy into it, to take a sense of ownership and responsibility, to play an active role. What makes people participate or not participate in some ways is reflective of just the general divisions in society that existed before the revolution. Sometimes these things manifest along cultural lines or different lines of identity. Other times these things line up with levels of

education, line up with gender dynamics. Different things are going on in these structures that determine who participates more and less and how. I want to say, that even within the community of people that would consider themselves a part of the movement, so to speak, a lot of people say they are supporters of the revolution, but they don't actively participate in the communes, for example. They still have this very passive approach to it and treat the administration as a government that they support, but still a passive approach. People who are in the movement in a more committed sense call this a state mentality. I've heard some of the more committed people complain, literally talking about their fellow Kurds, saying, "It's easier to get these people to pick up a gun and go to war and die than to attend an assembly." The hardest thing to do is get somebody to show up to a meeting. So it's really interesting how these things play out. I think it's one of the most important conversations about the revolution itself.

C: Yes, thank you very much for saying that, Arthur. I'll just say one quick add-on to that, which is that David Graeber has a very good intro that he wrote into Abdullah Öcalan's first prison writing, which is a whole thing. I encourage listeners to look up Abdullah Öcalan if they're not familiar. It really helps give context to the revolution in Rojava in general. One thing that David Graeber said in this intro was "This is a great idea, it's really worth a try, it's worth our support. I think they might have a problem with how much time it takes." That's something that we just have to contend with. Direct democracy takes a lot of time. So it is something to think about.

TFSR: **Yeah, those are all really good points. I appreciate the thoughtfulness of it. With that in mind, I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about what you experienced when you were in Rojava. You've already said a little bit about roughly how long you were there and some of the structures that you participated in, or were around, but if you could expand on that a little bit, that'd be great.**

An: I can go first here. So I went there twice. My first time was last summer, and I just recently returned from my second trip less than two months ago and spent there roughly six months in total. The first time I went to volunteer as an English teacher at the University of Rojava, one of the new autonomous universities that the administration has built. There are three of them now. This time, I spent some time with the women's house, Mala Jin, the same Mala Jin as Clara volunteered with in Qamishli. And perhaps my biggest takeaway—and this is something as an add-on to what Arthur and Clara were talking about for the previous question—I

just saw a lot of a big amount of demoralization among the regular folks. I believe when we talk about demoralization, and participation, of course, there are internal factors. It is just what you should expect with any revolution to happen, that you want to see huge enthusiasm among apolitical people for a new system of governance necessarily. But I think it also has been a systematic technique used by the Turkish state to undermine the Autonomous Administration, to make life unlivable in northeast Syria without even having to invade it and occupy it once again.

I think probably most of the people listening know Turkey has invaded twice since the second invasion and occupation in 2018 and has been bombarding the region, the areas near the front lines practically daily. They have been carrying out drone assassinations of civilian and political leaders of the Autonomous Administration, basically creating this atmosphere of fear. But perhaps even more significantly what has had, in my opinion, an even greater impact on people's enthusiasm for this new project, people's willingness to defend or build what is being built there, has been the ever-worsening economic conditions that these people have to live under. One big factor, of course, is the depreciation of the Syrian pound. We have inflation, something that the Autonomous Administration cannot control. But there's been also a policy by the Turkish state and the Syrian government of placing the region under a de-facto embargo. The Turkish state has been doing it through its proxy, in the KRG, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the KDP, the Barzani-led party there. They control the only currently functioning border crossing between northeast Syria and the outside world. Of course, the border with Turkey is pretty much closed.

TFSR: And the KRG and KDP in Iraq specifically, right?

An: Right. In the part of Kurdistan that's within the Iraqi borders. So the KDP, which has been collaborating with Turkey, including on trying to wipe out this revolutionary project that's also being led by Kurds, by their fellow Kurds, has had control over what can come in and out to the region. So a lot of even basic necessities the Autonomous Administration has had trouble getting them into the region because they have to deal with the KDP that controls the border crossing. Or whatever they can import has to be imported at higher prices than they would be able to do otherwise. The fact is that people have to struggle to meet their basic needs on a daily basis. I think Clara mentioned the electricity situation is, of course, even worse now after Turkey's latest military operation in the region. But just getting electricity, just getting a couple of hours of electricity per day is a real struggle. From my interactions with regular people, I just see that it really weighs down on them, discouraging them from investing energy into this project, especially when

it's so hard to see any hope for any resolution on terms beneficial to them in the near future. I think Turkey has been quite successful in this strategy of demoralizing the local population, and through this, weakening the popular support and the popular legitimacy of the Autonomous Administration.

TFSR: Just as a quick follow-up to that, if you don't mind. This is again after the large earthquake that happened about a year ago that affected the whole region. I know that there's a disaffection growing, which we'll talk about a little bit more in a bit, hopefully. But throughout Syria, there's a continued civil war that's never stopped, and there are increasing protest movements against the administration there, as well as there seems to be some—it's arguable I guess—continued dissatisfaction within Turkey with the Erdoğan regime. It's not like people are being disaffected or demoralized with the Rojava project and looking towards the other options as a reasonable alternative, is it? Or is it just this is hard work that we're doing, and still every day we have less and less water and electricity and tobacco and stuff like that?

C: No, that wasn't my experience. People want to go to Europe.

An: Yeah, Clara mentioned that the current situation in northeast Syria is the best across the entire country. So people from the other parts of Syria have been migrating to what we call the Rojava. So it's not that the Syrian government is representing a viable alternative that people are looking to in the region. It's more just a lack of hope, period.

C: The Rojava Information Center, if people are interested in Rojava and haven't heard of it, is a really great resource. It is a collective of media activists essentially just creating information about the revolution and the structure of the Autonomous Administration and the situation on the ground, the continued ISIS insurgency, the occupations of the different parts of northern Syria by Turkey, and human rights violations there. So really just serving as a resource to understand what's going on in the ground because there aren't very many journalists who are based there who are international. I would go so far as to say maybe none. So it serves as a resource. It also helps journalists who want to come to the region and want to cover what's going on in Rojava and northeast Syria to have access to the people that you need to know on the ground. Getting into the region can be difficult. We're also a support system for journalists who want to come. And also journalists who are writing from abroad who might have a few questions, we help fact-find and serve

as a resource, just to help get the word out. Because you can't be in solidarity with something if you don't know what's going on.

Then also, I was with the women's movement and spent some time with a Jineology Academy. The Kurdish word for women is jin. So Jineology means women's studies. A big part of the movement project and the women's movement is rewriting the script in people's heads about how we got to where we are now in the world and in the Middle East in terms of patriarchal structures that exist on the ground. Just thinking about history and how we got here, and so therefore, how we're gonna get out of it, and reclaiming women's history for themselves and also for the society in general. Thinking about the beginning of the state in Mesopotamia, and how the ziggurats, for example, institutionalized certain hierarchies within society and retracing that history so we can rewrite a new future. And doing that work in the context of the revolution. So women have the opportunity often to go to a Jineology Academy, and men as well, to think about these things, think about the female personality, the male personality, and how to move forward together in a good way. Then I also was at the University for some time teaching English. Then I also spent several months at the Mala Jin (women's house) within the justice system in Qamishli. That is a place where the justice system in general in Rojava is based on a restorative justice model for most things. So in general, the idea is, before you go to court—because there are courts, there are laws and there are prisons in Rojava—but this system is built so that for most things before you go to court, there is some structure that will help you go through a reconciliation process first. So that is different for different structures. If you have a trade dispute, you might go to the trade reconciliation office, or if you have a consumer dispute, you might go to the consumer support office. For domestic and family issues, there's the Mala Jin, which again is a phrase that means “women's house.” Essentially families, women, and men seek support from the Women's House, who are having domestic or family issues of one sort or another, can come to the Women's House, go through a reconciliation process with the women who work there who try to be impartial and yet move things obviously towards gender equality and the way that things are decided, and go through that process and then come to an agreement that the Mala Jin itself and then also the Asaish, the women's police, will follow up with the families and make sure that the agreements are being adhered to.

Ar: As I mentioned earlier, I spent a lot of time with a lot of different structures of the movement, moving around a lot, traveling to different parts of Rojava, and doing interviews and research. But for the sake of time, I think I'll just give one highlight. That was the time that I spent in a place called Shahba Canton. For those who don't know, Shahba Canton is the furthest west region in Rojava, or part of

Syria that's currently under the purview of the Autonomous Administration. It's north of Aleppo, in the countryside. It's a very small, isolated pocket. It's the place where the people of Afrin were displaced and moved their homes. So for those who don't know, what used to be the furthest northwest pocket of Rojava, and also the stronghold of the revolution in just about every way, was the region of Afrin. But in 2018, Turkey invaded, and has occupied since along with its proxies. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced. It was a mass act of ethnic cleansing, where the demographics went from 90+ percent Kurdish to not 20-something percent, I think. So this was a devastating blow to the revolution. But many of these families moved to the northern countryside of Aleppo, and they brought the revolution with them.

The circumstances under which they've been living since 2018 have been very difficult. Many people live in what we would call refugee camps. There's also a bunch of small villages that were largely abandoned at the time that they arrived that they have since built up. This part of Syria also includes the city of Tell Rifaat. It's just this incredible place because many of the problems that we're talking about earlier, dynamics of a real struggle that families are having, a sense of hopelessness, struggles that the movement is having with getting people to support and participate in, take responsibility for the structures of community self-governance—the communes, the councils, economic forms, cooperatives—in Shahba Canton, things are just different. There's an incredibly high level of cohesion within the community, a high level of solidarity, and a high level of political consciousness and development, which has a long history to it. I said Afrin was the stronghold of the Rojava revolution. But it's actually much older than that because the Kurdish Freedom Movement has been active there for decades. But what it really showed in a way that I was really grateful for was how those structures can function more at their best when people really are showing up to the assemblies, really are showing up to the communes day in and day out and participating. It was very inspiring. It was important to see things working closer to at their best because it showed a sense of possibilities and also highlighted these larger dynamics of the challenges. Then you have to ask yourself, what is it that makes things work differently here in Shabba than elsewhere? Say, in Jazira Canton. I'll stop it there. But that was the highlight of my trip for sure.

TFSR: Thank you. Those are all really interesting examples. I'd love to learn more if we have some more time near the end of the interview. To speak about some of the ongoing pressures and recent experiences of folks who are living in that area. Currently people in Rojava are suffering from a continued—as has been pointed out when naming dates of 2019, 2018, and

2016—these escalated cross-border attacks by the Turkish state. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about these Turkish attacks, and who's being targeted by them.

Democracy Now! recently had a brief headline discussing the escalation and pointing to AP or Reuters maybe, just really briefly, of “there was an attack on a police station in Ankara in Turkey’s capital.” They were attributing it to someone who was PKK-aligned. There were two sentences. There was no actual verification of that. But, anyway, it skips out of the time scale of this seems to be some increasing attack by the Turkish state across the border. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about a) that argument that this is in response to this thing that just occurred a couple of weeks ago that attacked police, or b) just talk about who is suffering the impacts of these drones or other attacks into the Autonomous Administration territories.

Ar: It’s a big topic. There was an attack in Ankara against a police station outside of the Interior Ministry, and the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers Party, claimed responsibility for that. So that appears to be true. I think two police officers were wounded. Turkey has said that this is some justification for its massive bombing campaign against northeast Syria. They’ve claimed without presenting any evidence whatsoever that these attackers came from northeast Syria, that there’s a direct connection. There’s no evidence of that. Regardless, of course, it’s no justification. So what’s going on in northeast Syria right now? Starting earlier this week, or over the weekend, Turkey started systematically bombing the civilian infrastructure of northeast Syria. They’ve bombed energy stations, oil wells, electrical facilities, factories, water facilities, food facilities, and hospitals. The only facility in the region that produces cooking and heating gas has been destroyed. It’s going to take \$50 million to rebuild that I believe, according to the Rojava Information Center. The impacts of these attacks are really hard to overstate. The region is being terrorized.

Erdoğan’s goal is clearly, as Anya mentioned earlier in the podcast here, to make Rojava unlivable for the people. They mentioned this PKK attack in Ankara as their justification. Of course, there’s no justification. If that attack hadn’t happened, I’m sure they would use some other excuse. But again the impacts are really hard to overstate: the whole region is in a state of alert. All three of us have friends there that we’re talking to every day. People are very, very concerned. Civilians have been killed. There’s been widespread disruption of basic services. The last I heard at least 2 million people were out of electricity. The winter months are coming. This could really be catastrophic. I think it lays bare the real goals of Turkey: to undermine the revolution by simply making the region unlivable, by terrorizing

society itself. These are not military targets. A grain silo is not a military target. A COVID-19 hospital is not a military target. Of course, bombing a military target in northeast Syria is also not justified. It's a violation of the ceasefire, which has so far been honored by the Syrian Democratic Forces. I'm sure Anya has things to add here. But we had an ECR, Emergency Committee for Rojava, we're really trying to raise awareness about this issue and build some political pressure in the US. But it's a work in progress.

An: Yeah, I would just also echo that Turkey does not need any pretext whatsoever to launch another attack, another operation, another invasion of the region. But it has been using its anti-terror discourse to justify whatever attacks it has been carried out. The fact that the PKK is on the terror lists of countries like the United States or the European Union has made it very convenient for the international community to remain silent when Turkey uses this discourse to justify its attacks. So we were not surprised. We were, of course, very frustrated, but not surprised to see the mainstream media, and even such progressive media like Democracy Now!, basically repeating Turkish talking points. "There was an Ankara suicide bomb attack, and we are retaliating against so-called terrorists," and all the media outlets just repeating that without questioning, like Arthur said, whether northeast Syria has any connection to that attack, which it does not, or even reporting on which targets Turkey has been bombarding in northeast Syria. Clearly, not any military targets, but civilian infrastructure.

So that's why we at ECR and the movement itself have been pushing for the resumption of peace negotiations within Turkey, between the Turkish Government, the PKK, and the PKK-affiliated Kurdish freedom movement, to come up with a long-term solution to the situation to take away this pretext that the Turkish Government has been using both to crack down on Kurds within its own borders and outside its borders, in Syria in Iraq, to remove their ability to use this anti-terror discourse as a legitimization tool. Of course, to get to that point, we also need to delist the PKK from other countries' terror lists. It's a good moment to mention the Kurdish movement has just launched a new campaign demanding the freedom of Öcalan, the Kurdish Freedom Movement's ideological and political leader, because they recognize that he is the crucial figure who can make the resumption of peace talks happen. And people can check out our website to get more information on that.

Ar: If I could also just quickly add for listeners who are in the United States. As all of this is going on, President Biden is urging Congress to sell an entire fleet of brand-new American-made F16 fighter jets to Turkey, along with modernization

kits to update the F16 that they already have acquired, which they're currently using, along with drones, to attack civilians in northeast Syria. This sale of F16s has to have congressional approval. The president can't just single-handedly force it through. The responsibility for that— on the ultimate authority, in other words— is on the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee. That was Bob Menendez. He's had a whole scandal. He's out of his position, so now there's a new chair. His name is Ben Cardin, Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland. Another thing that we're doing—in fact, when we get off the recording of this podcast, we're gonna go to a phone bank that we're organizing—to really put direct pressure on him to do the right thing and block this sale. He's expressed tentative opposition to it but wavered a little bit saying things like “Well, I'm gonna have to see the details. I'll speak more with the administration about this.” But this is a concrete way that the United States could stop enabling Turkey's crimes. And it should go without saying that everything that Turkey does in northeast Syria, or anywhere, is with United States support, with NATO support, military and political support. These planes, again, that they're using, as well as some of the parts in the Turkish drones even come from the United States. So those of us who are here have a responsibility to do everything that we can, to make sure that our tax dollars, so to speak, are not going to fund or enable these war crimes.

TFSR: An interesting thing I hadn't been aware of—and I wonder if you could enlighten me and the audience a little bit about—was the recent visit to Rojava by the US delegation in late August, which appears to be quite a shift from the chilling of the US since the Trump administration, but also maybe points to differentiation within the US administration between different departments or just between different politicians. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about if that gives a possible leverage point for undermining further arms sales to Turkey.

C: Contextually, one thing is that, if people are following this situation more closely, they might remember that Trump announced that we would pull all of our troops out of Syria in 2019. Then that led directly two days later to a Turkish invasion of northeast Syria. However, that didn't happen. As with many things, it's all talk. So actually, US troops never... I think maybe there were a few troop withdrawals, but there have been continuous US presidents since then. We have never pulled out of Syria. So I think at the military level, it was a management game of perception. On the perception level, it gave Turkey the green light to invade, but the reality is that we were still physically there, and we are still physically there as a military. So there's that. One is that that relationship has never been broken. That

was just one of those weird things that happened during the Trump administration, which is where what he was saying wasn't reflecting reality. Everybody had to scramble in the background. Then the other thing is I believe that that visit was primarily to the al-Hawl camp. It is the refugee camp in the Autonomous Administration territory. There are about give or take 50,000 people who still live there. The vast majority of them are family members, children, and wives of ISIS fighters. It's a difficult situation. Some people were fleeing ISIS, living there with them, unfortunately. That is a very difficult place. It's a really difficult powder-keg situation for the entire region and for the world. The Autonomous Administration has been left to deal with it pretty much by themselves. There are about 8,000 to 10,000 former internationals living there, and the Autonomous Administration is doing a lot of diplomacy to try to get them repatriated to their home countries. But of course, that's a security question for the home countries as well.

TFSR: You mean people who came internationally to support Daesh?

C: Yes, exactly. So Russians, French, Moroccans, Australians, Americans. Yeah, specifically. So that place is very difficult. There are often raids throughout the camp. There are attacks. And you now have young boys who've been living essentially in this big cage for a long time, for their coming of age, and receiving... they have what's called the "Cubs of the Caliphate." Daesh has a training of young boys, and the International section of the camp is so dangerous that UNICEF doesn't offer their normal educational services within that area. So a lot of education has been left to the community. The community within al-Hawl is connected to Daesh. So it's a very difficult situation. The longer people are allowed to, sort of, fester there, the more you get younger boys, and of course, younger women, as well, of course, the women themselves who are radicalized more and more. ISIS is still an insurgency. There are prisons in general in northeast Syria that hold about 10,000 ISIS fighters within them. Something needs to be done about that. They need a lot of support from the international community. Support is not forthcoming. It's very difficult with evidence to try to start a trial system, although they have efforts to do that. So just say the relationship that the US has with northeast Syria militarily is "predicated" on the continued defeat of the ISIS insurgency. As you can tell from what I've just said, that continues to be a big problem.

About two years ago, there was a big attack on one of the largest prisons holding ISIS fighters. They planned to break out the fighters and then go to al-Hawl, this big camp, to break them out and then, if the opportunity presented itself to reestablish territorial control. So it's an active threat. The US is there militarily because of that. Also, there are other chess pieces, of course, with Iran, etc.

What the Autonomous Administration calls for is one, more military support in the sense of a no-fly zone for Turkey to not be able to bomb. If we're going to be there militarily, we might as well actually support in a way that would be helpful to the project on the ground. And then also for political support, as well. So it's nice that they're there militarily, but what about recognition for the Autonomous Administration? What about statements saying that they support the incredible democratic, gender-equal project that is being built on the ground that all the SDF fighters are giving their lives to support? So that's what I would say about that.

Ar: I would just add that in broad strokes, the way we can see it is that the United States relationship to the administration or the movement in Rojava is a military one. It's not a political one. And even within the military support, it's very divided. This support is only to cooperate on operations against ISIS. If Rojava is being invaded by Turkey, the United States is, of course, not going to play any role in that. So what's going on is that while the region has received and continues to receive military support for operations against ISIS, it has yet to receive even formal political recognition as a legitimate government. The Autonomous Administration has never been recognized by the United States as a legitimate governing body. Nor has it been recognized by any other government in the world. I think technically the Autonomous Region of Catalonia, their parliament issued recognition a couple of years ago. But that's it. So that's something that we've been pushing for is formal recognition of the Autonomous Administration. That would help with a whole lot of other things as far as getting aid to them, as far as giving them a diplomatic seat at the table when it comes to the overall negotiations to end the Syrian conflict. But that has yet to happen. So we continue to push for that. To be clear, I don't think the movement sees either the recent delegation as any significant change of heart. It's I think it's more or less consistent with at least what the policy has been since the Biden administration came into power.

TFSR: **Yeah, someone had to use the term proxy earlier to describe some of the activities of the Barzani-led Peshmerga forces in Iraq. I wonder if y'all could maybe expand a little bit on how you see the military and political operations happening in Iraq affecting life and politics inside of Syria as the KRG continues to conflict with the SDF and with the KCK-affiliated forces?**

An: Well, I already talked about the embargo that the KRG has been posing, which I believe that it does so because it collaborates with Turkey. Arthur, would you add anything else?

Ar: It's another big topic. The most direct influence on Rojava is through the embargo, through their control of the border, through their control of what kind of aid or other economic products make it into northeast Syria. But for those who aren't familiar with the PKK, its guerrilla forces are based in the mountains of northern Iraq. Turkey increasingly occupies parts of northern Iraq. It has built a whole series of military bases. And the Kurdistan Regional Government and the KDP, which is hegemonic within that government, has been collaborating directly with Turkish forces and operations against the PKK. So at the very least I think we could see on a military level that that inflames the overall relations between what we call the Kurdish Freedom Movement, which is all of the revolutionary Kurdish organizations that follow lineage from the PKK, that follow the ideology of Abdullah Öcalan, even though there are organizational distinctions, which are very important to understand.

Nonetheless, when the KDP Peshmerga attacks PKK in northern Iraq, for example, or collaborates with Turkish attacks, people in Syria also see that as an attack on them too because of this larger identity that they have. They see it as an attack on their movement, which it is. So in a larger sense beyond just the economic embargo and the enforcement of what crosses the border, there's a real risk of Kurdish-on-Kurdish military conflict, which everybody I've talked to in the movement sees that as something that would be terrible, that when it does happen, it's tragic. The KDP also has proxy forces, you could say, or parties that are aligned with it within northern Syria, and that plays out in different ways. It's the main political opposition within northeast Syria. Political opposition to the Administration within the Kurdish community is in a party called NKS, which is the Syrian equivalent of the Barzani-led factions of the KDP in northern Iraq. But it's really it's such a can-of-worms conversation. There's links everywhere—military economic, political.

TFSR: Great, thank you. So August of 2023 saw the beginning, as I mentioned before, of large demonstrations emanating through and from southern Syria against the continued dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad's Ba'athist party. Have you heard about this, and is there solidarity being shown from within Rojava and also from the Autonomous Administration?

An: Yes, so we already talked about the dire economic conditions, not just in northeast Syria, but all across Syria. These worsening living conditions were what triggered the wave of protests in August earlier this year, specifically in As-Suwayda, south Syria, Daraa, and even some towns in the Damascus countryside. It was triggered by the Assad's government lifting of subsidies on heating fuel and gas,

which has more than doubled the prices of those basic necessities. But really, the protests were more than just about the economic situation and the slogans and the demands that people put forward. You can say it represented the continuity with the initial demands and initial inspirations of the 2011 so-called Arab Spring in Syria. People were chanting “Down with Assad,” which indicates a political component against the Assad government’s authoritarian policies and against the ongoing human rights violations in regime-held areas. So that was quite hopeful. There was a lot of solidarity pouring out from the Autonomous Administration, at least we from here were seeing many solidarity statements by different structures. For example, the women’s movement in northeast Syria expressed their support for the women participating in those protests in the regime-held areas and their demands for gender equality.

Overall, the Autonomous Administration has seen its project hopefully as a solution for the entire country, for the post-civil-war future of the entire Syria. For years now, they have been reaching out quite systematically, quite intentionally to other opposition actors within Syria. Particularly those who are not affiliated with the Turkish-backed Syrian National Council, which is the like Syrian opposition in exile, with whom the Kurdish moment at the outset, very early on, had a fallout because of the opposition’s Arab nationalist attitudes towards the Kurds. But in any case, the movement, the Autonomous Administration wants or envisions some decentralized, democratized Syria, as this country’s post-civil-war future. This is something they have been discussing with other actors opposed to the Syrian government in the rest of Syria. That’s why they welcomed this protest in the south of Syria earlier this year.

TFSR: Three major goals of the Rojava revolution are the abolition of patriarchy and the creation of an ecologically sustainable and anti-capitalist society. The 12 years of this project’s public existence has been obviously in the midst of a bloody and terrible civil war in Syria, as well as continued political and military intervention from nation states locally, like Turkey, and internationally. I wonder if you could speak a little bit about how the ecological dimension of the Rojava revolution has been able to develop or not during this time, and if there are any specific restoration or remarkable projects that you’d want to highlight for the audience.

An: Ecology. Well, if you talk to the people in the region who are involved with various ecological initiatives, they’ll tell you upfront, “This is one of the aspects of the revolution that has been least developed.” So they’re quite honest that they’re lagging behind on this front. Though, of course, other aspects of the revolution I

hope we'll discuss a little bit later haven't been developed as much as the movement wants to see them develop. But in any case, there are some hopeful projects taking place, and I'll talk more about the challenges later.

For example, I visited the very first recycling facility in Al-Hasakah that is being run by a couple of communes and with some support and funding from an Italian NGO. It's just the Autonomous Administration's attempt to even plant this idea that one's trash should be recycled. This is something very new to the people of the region. There is very little care, unfortunately, at this point for ecology, for the environment among the regular folks, and that's quite understandable. People who work with ecological initiatives say, "We understand that people have other priorities." When we tried to talk to them about recycling their trash, they told us "Well, when we get enough electricity per day, when we get our water, then come and talk to us about trash." But at the same time, the movement has been trying. So this recycling project that they launched as a pilot project has turned out to be rather successful. They're hoping to get more communes involved in this initiative, and hopefully open more such facilities in other localities. There have been a lot of tree-planting campaigns from early on.

And, I should probably note here that it's not because... It's sad to acknowledge that the biggest advance from the ecological front that the Autonomous Administration has done were these tree-planting campaigns, but the movement itself, the people working on ecology acknowledge that this is not because they believe, "oh if we plant more trees, we'll solve our climate-change problem." It's because they're trying to grow this consciousness among regular people about the necessity to change our relationship with the environment. So they've seen that as an entry point to develop that consciousness but also because of the history of this region. The Syrian government was using it as a wheat basket, a monoculture region, and even planting some fruit trees was prohibited to the local people. But more about challenges because if we want to talk about ecology and learning from the revolution, here we can learn more not from the successes but from the obstacles that they have been dealing with. So the big elephant in the room is oil. The region has to depend on its oil reserves from which it gets most of its revenues, including to maintain the armed forces, given the ongoing war conditions. If you talk to the movement, they all recognize, at least the people who work with the ecological initiatives, they recognize that this is in contradiction to the movement's philosophy that draws on the idea of Social Ecology developed by Murray Bookchin. They know that's a contradiction and a clear violation. But this is just what they have to do at the moment. There is no other major revenue source available to the Autonomous Administration under these conditions. Of course, they have a lot of sun. So, solar energy could be a viable alternative. But here, again, the same

obstacles that I've discussed in other contexts. They want to build a solar panels factory, but they're not able to because of this embargo that has been imposed on them. They're just not able to import the necessary equipment that will be needed for such an enterprise. If they can import what they need, they would have to pay way more than they would do otherwise, again, because of the KDP's control of the only border crossing. Of course, funding, especially talking about this after this latest military operation that wiped out so much of northeast Syria's civilian infrastructure.

Let's just think, where are they going to get funding to even repair that, let alone think how they can transition from oil to green energy? So really, what I think we should be all thinking is can these countries in the Global South in war zones, can they realistically even start considering the transition and deeper restructuring of their economies along ecological principles, given the circumstances that they have to deal with? And what would the role of the international solidarity movement be on this particular front? For example, the recycling facilities that I mentioned, that project has been funded by a sympathetic Italian NGO, and that's why they have been able to do that. But there are just so many things that are not able to be carried out because of all the obstacles I mentioned. So again, what can we expect from them realistically? How can we help them achieve those goals? That's something we should be thinking about.

TFSR: I don't mean to keep bringing up points in which the stated goals of the Rojava revolution haven't reached their point. But if we recognize that revolutions are a constant process, and no one's perfect, then, not meaning any insult to the project and the work that people have put in, it's just cool to hear about where people are working on improvement, as Anya stated. Another element that we haven't spoken about much in terms of the Rojava revolution has been the anti-capitalist element. I am wondering if you could talk a little bit about the application of communal or cooperative modes of production, if there is private property being held inside Rojava, if there have been any large redistributions of concentrated property holdings, and how the population's expressed feeling or made decisions around the question of private vs communal vs administrative ownership of property.

Ar: I'd be happy to take a crack at that. A lot of people may know already the Kurdish Freedom Movement underwent a major ideological transformation in the early 2000s, which was part of a reflection in some ways on the history of what they call "real socialism" of the Soviet Union. Also self-critical reflection on the movement's own experience. The part that people know most about is the transfor-

mation of this idea of an approach to the state. Instead of seeking an independent Kurdish state, the movement now seeks democratic autonomy. But the economic side of things is usually talked about far less than any of these other topics, and I'm really glad you brought it up because it's so important.

I think a lot of people don't realize that the movement never rejected socialism. It has transformed its idea of what socialism means, and at its core, it is this communalization of power. That's the idea of Democratic Confederalism. But the philosophy that the movement bases its ideas on economically is this concept of social economy or society economy, *aboriya civaka* in Kurdish. At its core, people can understand it as more or less classic communalist, communist economics, in the sense that it emphasizes the use value and rejects capitalism. But just like many other aspects of the revolution, the theory and the practice are sometimes diverging, or another way to put it is that the movement hasn't accomplished all of its goals quite yet. I think much like the previous conversation about ecology, the aspect of building the social economy has also been one of the least developed aspects of the revolution. That said, it's still a part of the life and structure of the movement on a daily basis.

There are a few different ways that they're trying to transform the economy. First of all, when it comes to land holdings before the revolution, as soon as the movement declared autonomy in its own territory, it expropriated all the property that was formerly held by the regime. It placed that property into the hands of what's now called the Autonomous Administration and/or directly into the hands of local communes and cooperatives to manage themselves. So one of the advantages in that case for those of us who would to see one or another form of the socialist transformation of the economy is that previously, because of the nature of the Ba'ath regime, of the Assad regime, the state-owned staggering amounts of property. There were large expropriations, but there were expropriations of the state. However, there have not been many expropriations of private property. I've heard of some that have come as a result of people who own, say, large land holdings, apartment buildings or something being found through the justice system guilty of various crimes or whatever and had their property given to the community. But that's actually pretty rare, as far as I understand. In fact, some people may know, that one of the contradictions of the revolution is that private property is technically protected under the social contract of the region. But I think we need to see that as something pragmatic in the sense that the people who want to see the socialist transformation of the economy are by far a minority in the region. They definitely were before the revolution, and they still are today.

So the movement is taking a long-term approach to this. Part of it is just trying to raise people's consciousness in the first place about what they call capi-

talist modernity and the need to transform society into what they call democratic modernity, which includes the social economy. But in practical terms, there are a few different ways this plays out. One is the creation of cooperatives. That's probably the primary driver of the transformation of the economy. Rather than taking existing private property and creating cooperatives out of it, for the most part, these cooperatives are being constructed as new economic entities, many of them out of property that was formally in the hands of the regime. For example, land being turned into cooperative farms that used to be held by the state. Talking about the cooperatives real quick, it's important to emphasize that the movement, just in all other aspects, emphasizes women's autonomy. So even within the economy, there's a whole adjacent committee called Women's Economy. What it's focusing on is prioritizing women, especially poor working-class women, women in households that don't have an income, and widows of martyrs, and bringing them together to form cooperatives, giving them land or whatever material means they need to create cooperative enterprises to maintain economic independence and to try to build the building blocks of the social economy.

But I think it's important to say that overall, these worker cooperatives are still a very marginal portion of the overall economy. For the most part, it's a mixed economy, but it's very much a market economy in a generalized sense, with a large public sector related to the administration. But besides the cooperatives, there's also a union movement, which is now under the purview of an organization called TEV-DEM whose role has changed over the years. TEV-DEM in Kurdish stands for the Movement for Democratic Society. They organize associations of all different workers: laborers, small shopkeepers, people who work for the administration, there's a teachers' union. There are efforts to expand unionization to organize all workers in society. They see that as a part of building Democratic Confederalism as a fundamental part of that.

There have been real limitations to, on one hand, building a social economy of the future that the movement dreams of, just a post-capitalist economy, and a lot of those constraints have been external. Anya mentioned the embargo. Of course, the instability of the constant attacks, the lack of capital, and a reliable revenue stream for the administration itself to be able to seed alternative economic projects has also been very limited. But also think it's worth mentioning that there's some of the limitations are internal in the sense that the movement is still navigating what it means to build an economics of Democratic Confederalism, in my opinion. I think it's still in the developing stages, the structures of governance in the sense of the communes and the councils that are federated from the local up to the original. Those are very well developed conceptually and practically. But when it comes to the economy, there's still a lot of debate about not just what is a

social economy but how are we really going to get there. I heard people with a lot of different ideas about what that meant and disagreements about the limitations of cooperatives and how to make decisions about what to do with private property and how to hold those who hold private property accountable.

But lastly, it's just really important for people to keep in mind that the external constraints are real. Even just to put it concretely in terms of there's a small handful of capitalists who control much of the trade to and from the KRG in northern Iraq, and Rojava is nowhere near a place where they can meet all their needs by producing everything that the society consumes or needs to consume. So they rely heavily on imports. But what that also means is that they rely on the small handful of pre-existing companies that have those relationships with the KRG that can move things in and out of the region.

C: I feel that we've spent a lot of time talking about all the difficulties that the revolution faces, and they are very many. The women's movement, it's a huge spark of light because the basis of the movement is women's liberation. So the fact that is going well (and I will explain how it's going well, very briefly) is a real cause for hope and a real cause for excitement, especially, as we know, in a place where ISIS continues to knock on the door. So it's a pretty wild juxtaposition. It's pretty amazing and awe-inspiring if you just take a second to stop and think about it. So in broad strokes, the women's movement and what women's liberation and gender equality means in Rojava is incredibly progressive. It means full women's autonomy, both in the military realm of society and in the civil realm of society.

So within the military forces, women are in autonomous units. In no place do they take orders or commands from a man. They can cooperate, of course, when necessary. Your female commander can tell you "For the next week, please listen to this male commander." But they have a genuinely autonomous system, which has incredible ripple effects on the society at large. They also have autonomous women's a police force and local community defense units. They teach each other how to use the weapons. They have all of the technical know-how that they need amongst themselves, and they are truly autonomous. That has ripple effects on the society at large, and makes a big difference if you know you really can't bully these people around. It's a subtle thing and it's also a not-so-subtle thing. In this society, there are also autonomous women's organizing structures that come from the root, of Kongra Star, which is the greater body of women's organizing. In every village or city, there'll be a Kongra Star office, the point which a woman can go to and make a point of contact with society, if she wants to get politically involved, if she needs help with something. The Mala Jin, the women's restorative justice system started out of the Kongra Star organizing structure. So that is a very positive thing.

There's autonomous women's organizing on the civil side and the military side. What that has grown into is a bunch of different structures, including a Women's Justice Council, which comes up with laws that affect women and family structures, with input, of course, from across the society. So in addition to the self-defense units, the justice system, the legislation, and the legislative bodies in general in Rojava, from the communes up to the levels that ladder up to the higher Autonomous Administration legislation, there's a 50% gender quota in the legislative bodies. There is also a co-chair system, meaning at every level from the communes up to the top of the Autonomous Administration and within the unions that Arthur was just talking about that are forming, within the Justice Council, in and all those structures that are connected to that Autonomous Administration, within TEV-DEM, there is the co-chair system, which is a man and a woman together making decisions and sitting in the executive seat. People have a lot of questions about that. It's very interesting. It's a new way of relating between men and women. It's a fascinating sociological experiment. I went around and took portraits of 70 pairs of co-chairs, and they have all different stories about how they work it out, how they make decisions together, what their process is, and how long it took them to get comfortable with that. But in general, they all agree, this really gives us strength. It's helpful to have not just one person in charge but also to have different perspectives. So it's a very interesting, very unique system.

There are other things on the ground, like there's an all-female village called Jinwar where a lot of women who experienced domestic violence often can go and live with their children. There are also the women's political education academies, mostly connected to Jineology, like I was talking about a little bit before. And just to mention that it's not just Kurdish women, the Syriac women have their own autonomous organizing. Syriac being the indigenous Christian population. They have their own Syriac Women's Union organizing body, which was also founded even before the revolution starting in 2005, in the late 90s. They have been also doing this organizing on the ground. So just keep in mind that it's never just one thing. It's always the confluence of different revolutionary timelines, different organizing struggles coming together and being in a mix and working together. That's really the spirit of the Autonomous Administration, bringing together all of the people's histories, of the peoples of this place, this a multi-ethnic area, and building that into a sustainable and harmonious system. In the majority-Arab areas, which were taken over from ISIS, the Arab women also realize they have slightly different needs, they have slightly different cultural realities. So they also about a year and a half ago founded their own assembly, which is a Kongra Star equivalent, called this the Zenobia Assembly, which is an old, famous queen from Palmyra in Syria. So there's a lot of stuff going on all the time.

Women have opportunities to get involved with political organizing, and they have opportunities to receive help from the Autonomous Administration and the justice system. There's a whole new women's law, which gives them many more rights than under the Syrian regime. They can also join a militia should they want to choose a slightly different life for themselves. That's not to say there aren't huge obstacles, culturally, logistically, everything for a woman who's trying to build a life for herself. It's still in a culture very much rooted in family values and family structure, which can be a very positive thing for some people and can be incredibly restrictive for other people. So it's complicated, it's moving, it's shifting. But there are real structures with a proven track record of success and slowly shifting the needle on gender equality within the society that exist and are functioning. It's a pretty amazing story, considering ISIS knocks on the door every day of what they're trying to do. It's great, a real reason for hope, in the world at large, not just in Rojava, I feel.

TFSR: Yeah, that's amazing. Thank you for touching on that. Obviously, there's a lot more that could be said about that that we sadly don't have time to do here.

But I wonder, just in closing, if you can send me a list of resources and then I'll tack those on into the show notes for folks to learn more, as well as projects that you think are pretty great. But if you could reiterate just what the ways that people abroad, particularly in the so-called US, can do to take some of the pressure off of the Rojava revolution in the people living in the Autonomous Administration, that would be super helpful.

Ar: Because I don't know exactly when this episode is going to air, I want to say first, that the best thing people can do is to get in touch with ECR by going to defendrojava.org. You can also email info@defendrojava.org. Pretty much on any of the social media platforms, you could find us @defendrojava. The reason I say that is because we don't just give updates on the situation on the ground, what's happening in northeast Syria, but we try to regularly organize advocacy campaigns. Part of that, even though it's not always the sexiest work for revolutionaries (but it's important to work nonetheless) is that we bang on the doors, literally figuratively, of elected officials, especially members of Congress to try to push them on this issue. Sometimes that means pushing them on very specific issues at very specific times, but in ways that could make a significant material impact on the movement there.

So, as was mentioned earlier, this issue of the proposed sale of F16 fighter jets to Turkey, while they're leveling infrastructure in northeast Syria and killing civilians, could not be more urgent and also could not be more timely. It's a great

opportunity for us to try to pressure especially Senator Ben Cardin on this issue to commit to blocking that sale. But more generally, we try to put pressure on all elected officials across the board to speak out publicly and forcefully on this issue but also to put forth possible legislation that could secure different kinds of aid. We call on them to push for political recognition of the Autonomous Administration and a whole host of different issues. So the best way is just to get in touch, become our comrade, and work on it with us together.

An: If people are listening, if you are part of any leftist, progressive group, network, etc, help us build bridges. That's one thing that we have been trying to do more and more—build bridges between organizers here in the United States and directly with organizers there, on the ground in northeast Syria. If people go to our website, and our YouTube page, you'll see some of the meetings that we've had so far with the unions, with cooperatives on both sides of the world. We want to do more. We want to connect people and build organic solidarity relationships so that both sides can learn from each other and support each other.

TFSR: Great, thank you so much, all three of you, for participating in this conversation and for bringing the knowledge and experience that you have, and for the work that you're doing. Really appreciate it.

Ar: Thank you so much for inviting us on.

An: Thanks.

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